**Forensic Service ‘On-Hold’ Policy**

**For State Funded Alcohol and Other Drugs Service Providers**

# **Introduction**

This document is for Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) service providers that provide assessment, treatment and support services to forensic clients. It contains information for agencies that have reached capacity and are unable to accept forensic referrals from Community Offender Advice and Treatment Service (COATS). This document provides rationale for on-hold requests and how to submit the *On Hold Form for AOD Service Providers*.

**When to submit the *On-Hold Form***

All approved (DH-funded) AOD service providers are required to complete the On-Hold form when their organisation is unable to accept forensic referrals from COATS, including comprehensive assessments. **Service providers are not able to submit and on-hold request for voluntary clients.**

Service providers and consortia may request to go on-hold for forensic referrals, if:

* there is a change in circumstances such as increased demand/high volume of referrals that lead to increased wait times
* a sudden departure of a staff member leads to a short-term inability to respond to demand
* Force Majeure: events such as flooding or fire which force temporary or permanent closure of a site location
* temporary office/site closure due to site renovations, or permanent site or agency closure, and
* Christmas and New Year period closures.

# **Consultation with APSS and AOD Service Providers**

Agency Performance and System Support (APSS) in the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) focuses on the performance of service providers against given targets and funding set out by DH. As directed by APSS, service providers/consortia are required to identify who they have consulted from their local APSS division, and that consultation with consortia partners (if applicable) and other service providers in the same catchment has occurred.

Service providers are required to consult APSS, preferably prior to going on hold, or within a maximum of two weeks from the date the service was placed on hold. Regular communication between APSS and service providers should continue fortnightly, if the on-hold period is longer than two weeks.

In all cases, service providers and consortia must exhaust all efforts to address demand fluctuations and other service delivery issues before submitting the On-Hold form. They must also inform APSS when lodging a form. APSS, consortia partners and service providers are required to operate collaboratively to assist with reallocation of referrals or resources to address high demand. COATS will continue to provide this information to DH via monthly reporting.

# **Planning requirements before submitting the On-Hold form**

It is the responsibility of the consortium lead to submit the On-Hold form on behalf of their consortia partners or entire consortium. Stand-alone service providers will submit the form themselves. When a service provider or consortium makes a request to go on hold, service providers will continue to work with APSS to achieve their overall targets, as well as COATS and APSS to achieve their forensic targets.

Before submitting the On-Hold form, a service provider or consortium must first:

* confirm that demand cannot be managed across consortium members
* confirm that all other options for increasing service provision have been exhausted, including options for remote service delivery
	+ develop a plan for responding to the short-term issue requiring the on-hold request, and
	+ confirm that it will continue to work towards achieving its overall and forensic targets.

# **How and where to apply for an On Hold request**

To make an on-hold request, service providers should submit a COATS *On Hold Form for AOD Service Providers* which is an electronic document available on the Australian Community Support Organisation’s (ACSO) website: [On Hold Form for AOD Treatment Providers | ACSO](https://www.acso.org.au/referrals/community-offender-advice-and-treatment-services-coats/). Forms will be processed by the COATS Client Services Unit (CSU), which can be contacted on 03 9413 7196.

# **What happens to client referrals if a service provider or its services are on hold?**

COATS requests multiple preferences from clients for treatment providers. If this is not provided the service provider nearest to the client is generally the primary choice. When a service provider or some of its services are on hold, clients are referred to an alternative provider if agreed to by the client and/or Justice case manager. In most instances this leads to clients travelling further distances to access AOD treatment otherwise they are placed on the service provider’s wait list. COATS may have capacity to offer bridging support to clients while they wait for treatment.

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